

a g e n d a

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*Leningrad translated by
PETER RUSSELL.*

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With this issue of AGENDA we increase the size of the publication to eight pages; to cover the cost of this it has been found necessary to increase the subscription (12 issues) from 5 to 10 shillings. This will, of course, not effect those who have already subscribed at the lower rate until their subscriptions are due for renewal.

We shall be publishing a greater amount of poetry than previously which indicates a change of method which can be summarised by restating the principle that creative work is the most valid form of criticism. It is also evident that, whatever their editors may imagine, the best work of this kind does not often find a place in the big, or even medium sized, literary periodicals.

We plan to publish in the next six issues:

- 1) *A Poet's Life and Context* a long poem by Noel Stock.
- 2) *A Survey of Recent Books* compiled by several hands.
- 3) *A Sequence of Poems from Catullus* translated by Peter Whigham, with an introductory note.
- 4) *Translations from Mencius* by David M. Gordon.
- 5) *Passages from the Kuan Tzu* by Kuan Chung selected by Noel Stock and David M. Gordon.
- 6) Some work connected with Leo Frobenius and Heidegger.
- 7) An issue devoted to the work of Wyndham Lewis.
- 8) *A Survey of buried and lost classics, Greek and Latin.*

All this material seeks to create a context in which vital literature can be written.

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THE PAINTING

Starting from black or
finishing
with it

her defeat stands
a delicate
lock

of blonde hair dictated
by the
Sorbonne

this was her last
clear
act

a portrait of a
child
to which

she was indifferent
beautifully
drawn

then she married and
moved to
another country

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

LENINGRAD 1930.

I have come back to my city, familiar to the point of tears,
To the blood in my veins, to my childhood's swollen tonsils.
You have come back here—so swallow up quickly
The cod-liver-oil of the Leningrad river-lamps:

Quickly make up your mind to the short December day
When the air is a mess of egg-yolk and evil tar.
Petersburg! I do not wish to die yet—
All my telephone numbers are with you.

Petersburg! I still have addresses
By which I shall find the voices of the dead.
I live on a back staircase—wrenched out with the flesh
The noise of a bell strikes in my temple,

And all night long I wait for welcome guests
Stirring at the fetters of door-chains.

translated from the Russian of Osip Mandelshtam by
PETER RUSSELL.

THE CYCLOPS-IDEOGRAM

Just as Maine found in the study of the Cyclops that the family, not the individual, was the original component of society, and that the ancient family bonds have been replaced by the modern legal contract, thus arriving at his thesis: "the movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement from *status to contract*", so may we use here the Cyclops as a *grundlage*, a basis, against which to correlate the 'family-plan' terminology of Mencius.

Polyphemus is the powerful negative metaphor for the Homeric Greek; and insofar as such he dramatically manifests certain affirmative opposites *δίκαιος* and *δίκος*, decrees an innate sense of legality, dooms, justice, a tradition of law, and if these two words were to be translated into the Chinese of Mencius, we would probably have the character *i 4* (I give here an approximate pictorial representation of the ideogram), *hand taking spear and sacrificial ram*, having the meaning: equity, probity, *onestà*, duty to one's fellow man, sanction. Mencius says of *i 4* that its origin is that quality which causes us to react with odium and loathing, that one naturally has.

義

仁

Mencius might also use *jen 2* — *the whole measure of man*, having the meaning: humanity, manhood, adult, "backbone and guts". We compare this from the Odyssey: *ἐπιστροφος ἦν ἀνθρώπων*, conversant with man. Mencius says that its principle lies in not being able to endure — *sword over the heart* — the suffering of others.

The sacrifice being meaningful to both Mencius and Homer, one would also add the ideogram *li 3* — *the light of the sun, moon and stars raying down and a voice from a sacrificial urn*, meaning: propriety, good manners, a sense of decorum, fitness and aptness; of which Mencius says that its principle is in the yielding the 'right of way'.

禮

智

And the ideogram for wisdom *chih 4* — *the sun's barb issuing from the mouth*, of which Mencius avers: man's natural predilection for dispute. *Chih 4* indicates a type of solar illumination compared with *chih 1*, which lacks the sun radical and might describe a difference Richard of St. Victor was referring to in his distinctions between *cogitatio*, *meditatio*, and *contemplatio*. We may further consider the ideogram *te 2-5* — *scholar looking into the heart and acting on the results*, in which the eye radical compares with *ἰσέναι* to see, and the heart radical with *ᾠσέναι* the heart as the seat of the mental faculties. Liddell notes the derivation of *δίκαιοι* from the Sanskrit, *diś*, *diśā*, 'direction' and 'quarter of the heavens', which might be translated by *tao 4* — *head and eyes leading the feet and their tracks*, meaning "the way"; and *ch'ien 2* — *cutting the moon into sections*, meaning archetype.

德

道

前

Perhaps we may allow that Polyphemus' monstrous size, *πελώριος*, "not like a man but of high mountains" *ὕψηλόν* *ὄρεών* may be the Homeric reverse image of man with his spiritual element dwarfed by the mountainous corpus, and the stark single eye further indicating the sole physical nature of the Cyclops. Mencius speaks of *ch'i 4* — *vapour rising from rice*, as being vastly great, enduring, and when nourished on uprightness, it fills the space between heaven and earth (this may coincide with Plotinus's description of the hypostasis.) Various dictionaries give a number of meanings but it may indicate the *virtu*, power, radiance given off from the grain; *pneuma*, and Telemachus carries the epithet *πηνυμένος* the wise, perhaps a spiritedness.

Now in following desultorily the episodes of the Cyclops we may put this terminology to the test.

οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσὶν φυτὸν οὔτ' ἀρόωσιν

they plant no fruit trees with their hands nor do they plough
This may be contrasted with the refrain-like exhortation of Mencius: "Don't run counter to the agricultural timing on the farms, and the corn in overplus will be more than can be eaten." One may notice that the ideogram *nung 2* — *command issuing from geological striation*, meaning agriculture, has two elements, the lower one which appears to be geological striation, and the upper which we see is the same that was above the urn radical in the ideogram of propriety, v.s. *li 3*: *a mouth with sound coming out*. On examination of the seal text, this element looks like a bulb with a shoot growing from it out of the ground, all of which may indicate a veneration for agriculture.

In the next paragraph, possibly very ancient, "Plant mulberry trees..." in which the character *shu 4* seems to contain the following elements: *hand*, *plant in pot* and *tree*. If we compare this ideogram with the greek verb *φυτεύω* used above, we may see that both the ideogram and the Greek verb contain the act of planting as well as the plant planted.

ὑπερφιάλων

overweening, overbearing, apparently contrasts with the ideogram for propriety, *li 3*, with *ὑπέρ* meaning over, over; and *φιάλη* meaning bowl or cinerary urn.

οὔτ' ἀγοραὶ βουλευφόροι οὔτε Θέμιστες

neither counsel nor a set of laws

In contrast to this is the remark by Mencius on the necessity of *pien 4*, discussion, explanation, argument, in order to set man's heart straight, to banish perverse ideologics, oppose their flattering followers and get rid of their licentious expressions. This ideogram has *bitter*, *words*, *bitter*, in which the radical for bitter *hsin 1*, in the seal text, might indicate an object in the top of a platform or tree, a proclamation, a hanged man, a funeral pyre,—I only hazard a guess.

nor a set of laws

"If there be not principles of government-affairs, there will not be money to go around", in which *cheng 4*, *hand rapping*

氣

農

樹

辯

政

事

*gavel at official building, meaning government, to govern; shih 4—hand using writing instrument or holding sceptre of office, meaning affairs; and ts'ai 2—money in palm of hand; seem to be the three principal elements in this phrase. In examining a number of related ideograms we may come more completely to a translation of *thémistes*, as in the case of *cheng 4*, v.s., the left part contains the radical meaning up-right, which may be a skeletal structure of a building with a horizontal official capstone, or capital, and in comparison, Θέμιστος, meaning “that which is laid down or established law, or as established by custom”, and the apparent similarity with the verb τίθημι meaning to set up, put, place, establish, especially in the second aorist form*

Θέμενος

Τέκτονες
That the Cyclopes have no “craftsmen” to build them ships contrasts with the legendary Chinese skill with the compass and square (IV.i.I.I).

οὐδ' ἀλέγουσιν

they care nothing for each other

λέγω, meaning to speak is apparently a part of this word and would contrast with the great importance of “standing by one's word” for Mencius, in order to keep the state from falling into a “tiger-trap”.

νύκτα δι' ὀρβυαίνην

衰

As Odysseus approaches the Cyclopes' island there is only murky night, “Hell is murky”, with which we compare *shuai 1*, decline, and *wei 2-1*, obscure, secret, in the sense that when the principles of justice are obscured and darkened, violence follows and words no longer have their correct usage. Both ideograms express this meaning: *Shuai 1—something wrapped in clothing*, and *wei 2-1—something buried under a mountain*. A further ideogram meaning dark is in reference to the epithet a king will earn if he oppress his people, *yu 1—small animals hidden in the crevices of a mountain*. It is also used (III.i.IV.15) to describe Mencius' consternation resulting from anyone being drawn to the doctrines of Hing, who would reduce everything to barbarianism by his failure to distinguish between different types of labour and different kinds of things, e.g., all shoes the same size would be the same price, regardless of quality, etc, and Mencius says: I had heard of leaving *dark* valleys to ascend to high trees but not leaving high trees and descending to *dark* valleys.

ὀβρισταί τε καὶ ἀγριοὶ οὐδέ δίκαιοι

violent, savage, unjust

Odysseus' dire bodement of whom he will meet—perhaps we may translate this by Mencius consideration of basing one's motives on profit, *li 4—stalk of corn and knife*. Mencius' thesis is that if a state is based on the profit-motive, equity, *i 4*, v.s., will be placed last and the state will not stop snatching until *the hen-roosts have been robbed—t'o 2-5*.

φιλόξεينوι, καὶ σφιν νόος ἐστι Θεουδῆς

財

微

幽

利奪

敬

愛

do they love strangers and fear the gods in their mind
Mencius defines: the humane man loves—*ai 4—hand covering the heart of a man walking—others*; the man of propriety respects—*ching 4—the power that causes seed to put forth shoots—others*.

ἀγῆνωρ ... μεγάλην ἐπιειμένον ἀλκήν,

arrogant man wrapped in great might,
knowing neither justice nor law

辟邪修

Mencius' description of what occurs when there are sporadic depressions in the livelihood of the people: they lose their fixed heart and fall into that stage of unleashed, hanged-man recklessness and bone-rotted depravity, where there is nothing they will not do. The ideograms here are *p'i 4-5—the bitter radical with a corpse and coffin*, *hsieh 2—teeth and mound*, meaning heterodox, perverse, vicious, nefarious, and *ch'ih 3—man and two setting suns*, meaning rank and extravagant.

"The keeper of small cattle", the Cyclops, with "great technical proficiency" separates and distinguishes between crates of cheese, yearlings, freshlings, newly born, vessels of whey, milk-pails, which may be contrasted with Mencius' constant cataloguing of mankind, as (VII.ii.XXV) "a man of conscience, a man whose word stands with him, an ideal man, a great man, the king's mouth and ear, a spirit man", and when he describes the five human relationships (III.i.IV. 8) and the five methods of study (VII.i.XL).

ἐμὲ δ' οὐ λάθην εἰδότα πολλά

he didn't escape me because of my vast store of wisdom
Concerning the Cyclops' type of mentality, Mencius speaks about war, (VII.ii.II.i) "There are no righteous wars." (VII.ii.IV.1; IV.i.XIV.2). He refers (VII.ii.XXIX) to the type of criminal mentality that knows just enough to get itself bumped off.

Νήπιός

You are a fool stranger, coming here from way off and ordering me to dread or run from the gods! The Cyclopes take no stock in aigiokos Zeus and the makaroon gods, we're the more powerful! . . . jumping up, with his hands gaffed my comrades, grabbed two and like puppies bashed them on the ground and their brains ran out and dewed the dirt, tore them limb from limb and got ready for supper

(III.ii.IX.9) Mencius militates against Yangism—"every man for himself", in which everyone is more 'equal' than the king; and Mihism—all are loved equally, in which everyone is more 'equal' than their father. These being two forms of the failure to make distinctions which for Mencius will lead to serious circumstance: their rotted speeches will frame-up, *wu 1-2—sorcerer's sistrum or thyrsus and words*, and block humanity and equity. When humanity and equity are stopped-up, beast will glut on beast and man will gorge on man.

評

體

Mencius tells of the origin of taxing: there being order in the market place until one day a sharkish character, *chien 4* — money and two spearmen, *spear merchant*, jumped up on a mound in the market place and looking left and right proceeded to catch in his net the whole profit of the market, and thus caused the necessity of taxation. The paradoxical metaphors of Polyphemus' peloric size: "Those who follow the great part of the substantive make up of man, *t'i 3* — schema of the cranial bones, flesh and sacrificial urn with voice, are great men; those who follow the little part are bipeds.

ἀρραδίην

three times I gave the fiery wine and three times he quaffed it in his dementia

Mencius on the drink of moderation: "those who don't know how much wine is enough, *yen 4* — sheltered dog gorging on meat and sun, are 'a stove—in hull'.

Οὐρίς

Noman is slaying me by trickery

誠

Concerning "le mot juste", Mencius tells the success story: "the man who doesn't pour illumination on the square voice of his conscience will not be able to get the punctual word, *ch'eng 2* — lanceman and word, and this is the prime requisite for the man with a background, for if he not have this precise terminology, individual, family, state and empire will be founded on a vacuum.

κίχῃσεσθαι

Your evil deeds would surely return on your head

徹

For oppressing the people there is the fixed tax (III.i. III.7); for benefitting the people there is tithing and sharing, *ch'e 4-5* — man making tracks, official stamp on cut of meat, rap of demand (?). And (I.ii.XII.2) if you cause the people calamity, watch out! *Chi'ai 4* — hands grabbing a spear, that which goes out from you will return to you!

戒

δξύν ἐπ' ἄκρῳ

and they took the stake of olive wood, sharp at the point, and rammed it into his eye

制

The formula for tranquility: if you will give the people a humane government, go light on fines, easy on taxing, so that every one can plow and cultivate properly, the young will respect the elders, there will be the development of self-discipline and mid-heart, plumb-centre sincerity, and when the enemy invades, that sustained folk will take up the prepared sword of the law — *chih 4*, and penetrate, *ta 2-5*, his heavy armour.

達

DAVID M. GORDON.

JUDAS

I.

Like beavers at the hole of Time, your small
Betrayals

are gnawing at my own;
And open the close grain
in which I've grown
Timbered in silence
with no defence

against that rope's eloquence
And that shame that seemed my own
though it were shared.

As He for me, so I for Him.
That night both of us bore no weight
upon our feet
as we dangled beneath the sky.

So let that tree from which I hung myself fall
And all
its branches break
And its limbs speak.

The severed trunk articulates my grief;
My tears like leaves are quite beyond recall.

I know few will listen: none believe.
Facts can be given;

their meaning cannot be given.
Truth is only
for those who can bear its weight away.

It takes a thief to understand a thief, as it needed Judas
to betray a Jesus.

From III.

First one, then the other shouldered his way to sleep
round the slow embers,

And I must have dozed off as well,
for I remember Peter asked me something or other
And when I answered I saw he was asleep too.

Then I noticed the empty blanket--
He was standing by the gate alone

I never saw a man look more alone.
It was always so,

as though His loneliness extended
To the very hem of night.

He did not see me approach
Nor turned towards me when I stood beside Him,

But put His hand up to my shoulder
'Judas' He said, knowing it was I.

For I was as fond of Jesus
As Jesus was of Lazarus.

And for a long time He stood there looking beyond the river

Beyond the village, into the hills
 that crouched like bullocks round our fire
 As though wondering whether it was worth going on
 Or whether to return to His bench at Nazareth
 Where His mother, Virgin in heart, was busy with neighbours,
 and had to put up with charity
 And pretend not to notice the sarcasm
 when they asked her about her Son's great mission—
 At least His plane left some impression on the wood;
 No teak so obstinate, nor ebony so hard
 As their indifferent hearts.

IV.

And every day He waded through
 this sewer that is this world
 Brought only more tenderness to His eyes.
 To Him envy was a lameness,
 Jealousy an illness;
 He used to smile at greed
 And called usury excessive fear;
 The drunkard vomiting in the gutter
 Had His head held by that Hand;
 The gambler's bad luck was His too;
 For vanity He had flattery; for gluttony a recipe
 He was everything to everyone—
 As though He was not of Himself, but in them;
 Love was His element, all was its object;
 Both the bully and the shrew had his ear,
 Each thought Him their ally and left with less despair:
 Only the smug, the prigs, the prudes
 Seemed to be beyond His reach.
 With their Hosannas polluting the bazaar.
 It was when they praised He paused to doubt Himself
 And when commended for His abstinence
 He filled His glass again.
 But for all frailty, weakness or excess
 He had tolerance, being dressed Himself
 In flesh.
 I never knew a man with more tolerance
 It was as if all sins were His own
 This Man loved men so much
 He became one.

RONALD DUNCAN.

The whole of "Judas" is to be published this spring by Anthony Blond Ltd., 36 Chester Row, London, S.W.1. It will contain twelve original illustrations by John Piper; it is printed on hand made paper by the Chiswick Press with slip cover. Price £3 3s. Each copy will be signed by Ronald Duncan and John Piper. All subscribers names will be printed at the end of the book. The edition will be limited to 500 copies.

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